

Volunteering Policy

Developed January 2016



Introduction

The Mission of Aspire-The Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland is to provide support to people with Asperger Syndrome and their families in living full and fulfilling lives.

It does this by:

- Providing information and guidance to people who have Asperger Syndrome, their families and professionals who work with them
- Facilitating services and supports designed to address the needs of this group
- Conducting research into the condition and the most effective supports available
- Ensuring that the organisation has an online presence to ensure information is as accessible as possible
- Providing conference, seminars and training for interested parties in the community

Aspire is committed to involving volunteers directly within the organisation to:

- Contribute to the delivery of our services
- Make sure we are responsive to the needs of our users.
- Provide different skills and perspectives.
- Offer opportunities for participation by people who might otherwise be excluded.

This volunteer policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers.

Principles

Aspire:

- Recognises that voluntary work brings benefits to volunteers themselves, to service users and to paid staff.
- Will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to the organisations work.
- Will not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.
- Expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.

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- Recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.
- Will endeavour to identify and cover the costs of involving volunteers.
- Recognises that the management of volunteers requires designated responsibilities within specific posts.
- Will endeavour to involve volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and ensure our volunteering opportunities are as accessible as possible

Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers will generally be from all sections of the community, and will be in line with the Aspires Equal Opportunities Policy. Positive action in recruitment may be used where appropriate.

People interested in becoming volunteers with Aspire will be provided information on the volunteering roles available at that time. They will be given an information pack including general information about the organisation and specific information on the volunteer post in which they are interested.

All volunteers will be asked to complete a simple registration form appropriate to the role that they are applying for and to supply their CV and a reference (where possible). Where applicants are not placed in the role applied for, they will be provided with feedback and given the opportunity to discuss alternative volunteering roles both with Aspire and other volunteer involving organisations, particularly within the Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups.

Every volunteer role will undergo a risk assessment. For volunteer roles which involve 'regulated work' such as care giving and/or sustained and direct contact with children or vulnerable adults, Aspire has a legal obligation to ensure that volunteers are not barred from working with children or vulnerable groups. This will be achieved through subjecting each volunteer to Garda Vetting as part of the application process.

Volunteer Agreements and Voluntary Work Outlines

Volunteers will receive a role description and volunteer agreement containing full information about their chosen area of work and a clear idea of their responsibilities and the volunteer's responsibilities to them.

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Induction and Training

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken.

Support

Volunteers will be assigned a named contact person who will provide regular support. Support sessions will provide the opportunity for ongoing dialogue about the development of the volunteering role and any advice and guidance as needed. Where the volunteering role is emotionally demanding these sessions also give volunteers the opportunity to access emotional support from the organisation.

The Volunteer's Voice

Volunteers will be consulted in decisions which affect them. Aspire is committed to developing consultation and representational procedures for volunteers.

Records

Minimum details will be kept on volunteers. This will include the registration form, references, placement details, crisis contact, correspondence and any other relevant information in accordance with Aspires confidentiality policy.

Expenses

Aspire will ensure that there is a clear and accessible system to enable volunteers to claim out of pocket expenses.

Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by insurance while carrying out agreed duties.

Health and Safety

Aspire will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the volunteers' health, safety and welfare while at work in accordance with the centre's Health and Safety policy.

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Equal Opportunities

Volunteers and staff will work in accordance with Aspires equal opportunities policy and will prevent discrimination on any grounds.

Problems

Aspire has a policy to help deal with grievances that volunteers may have. In line with this policy volunteers have the right to discuss any concerns they may have with their named contact at any time.

Endings

When volunteers move on from their role at Aspire they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully with their Volunteer Support Worker or a member of the management team.

On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will be supported to move on to other options.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Aspire will systematically monitor and evaluate its use of volunteers with reference to this Volunteer Policy.

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually.